



Committed to the future of rural communities.

Rural Resources

www.rurdev.usda.gov/me

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Michael W. Aube, State Director

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"Your newsletter for building rural communities."



Message from the State Director:

Welcome to the first issue of *Rural Resources*. Our newsletter is designed to update and educate our partners on Rural Development's Housing, Business, and Community programs. Along with providing

updates on funding availability and upcoming events, we will share the stories of lives that have been transformed through our programs. I hope you will enjoy this newsletter.

USDA Rural Development Invests Over \$147 Million in Rural Maine Communities

Many important accomplishments were made in Fiscal Year 2005. Through Rural Development's Housing Programs, 684 Maine people obtained or maintained homeownership, and a total of **\$80,844,291** was invested. Through the Business Programs, 953 jobs were created or saved, 126 business were supported, and a total of **\$15,585,866** was invested. The Utilities Programs resulted in 73,636 Maine residents having access to quality water systems; and through the Community Facility Programs, 39 facilities, such as schools, hospitals, and libraries, were assisted for a statewide investment of **\$51,001,205**. The total investment in Fiscal Year 2005 was **\$147 million**.

Assistant to the State Director Named



Michael W. Aube, State Director of USDA Rural Development, has announced that Valarie Flanders of Plymouth has been selected to the position of Assistant to the State Director at the State Office in Bangor. Valarie will provide leadership and advice in identifying community needs, resources, and

problems. She will also work closely with local and state officials in stimulating interest in plans and programs for community development. She was promoted from her previous position as Business and Cooperative Program Specialist.

Valarie has over 20 years of experience with the agency. Throughout her career she has worked in the Multi and Single Family Housing Programs, Community Facility Programs, Water and Waste Programs, and most recently in Business Programs. She is a former President of the Maine Association of Credit Specialists and is currently serving as President of the National Association of Credit Specialists.

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Housing Programs

Program Funds Available

Rural Home Loan Partnership (RHLP) funds are still available. The RHLP Program brings private lenders and local non-profit groups together with Rural Development funding to assist low and very - low income applicants in acquiring affordable housing. The program requires that three partners be involved with a combination of loans, grants, and/or homebuyer education. For more information contact your local Rural Development Area office.

The **Section 504 Repair and Rehabilitation Loan and Grant Programs** are available to those households at or below 50 percent of median income (very low income). Through the 504 Grant Program, funds are available to assist senior households with repairs to correct health hazards. Through the Section 504 Repair and Rehabilitation Loan Program, seniors or low-income rural residents can obtain loans to remove health and safety issues, as well as other home rehabilitation projects. Rural Development's 504 Program is available through any of our area offices, or by contacting one of the Community Action Agencies participating in the Maine Home Repair Network. Section 504 Workshops are currently being held. View Rural Development's Community Calendar at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/me/Calendar.htm>

The **Guaranteed Single Family Housing Program** is available to assist moderate income households who do not have the funds needed to meet conventional loan down payment requirements.

Unity Garden's Grand Opening

Unity Gardens, a 48-unit elderly development in Windham, completed its final loan closing in early November and celebrated with a ribbon cutting ceremony in early December. The project has been open since August, but finalizing the requirements of the various regulatory agencies has only recently been completed. The project has 48 one-bedroom apartments on two stories with an elevator, laundry facilities on each floor, a community garden space, and a large dining area. The project is fully occupied.

Southern Maine Agency on Aging continues to provide meals on site as Unity Gardens is a distribution site for Windham. Meals are offered daily Monday through Friday in the community room. Funding for Unity Gardens was provided by USDA Rural Development, Maine State Housing Authority, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and Northern New England Housing Investment Fund.

Quilts for Katrina:

Rural Development Staff Member's Quilts Comfort Evacuees

It isn't easy getting used to a new home—especially one that is well over a thousand miles from where you used to live, and when your former home was destroyed by a hurricane. This is the situation many victims of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita were facing. Fortunately, USDA Rural Development was able to lend a helping hand to many of these families, providing homes in Multi-Family Housing across the country. Under the Federal Disaster Declaration, emergency housing was made available to the families for a six-month period.



Alice Kelley displays one of the quilts she made. She has been making quilts for 35 years.

In Maine, ten families made new lives for themselves, living in housing across the state. One Rural Development employee with a very big heart had to do something to make the children of these families feel at home.

Alice Kelley, who works out of the State Office in Bangor, enjoys making quilts. So much in fact that she has crafted about 20 in 2005. Four of these quilts she made for children of evacuees, just in time for the holidays. Each quilt takes Alice two to three weekends, but all the hard work is worth it. "The families have been through rough times and I hope that a quilt, being the homey symbol that it is, will brighten their worlds." Each quilt has a label sewn into it which reads "He (or she) who sleeps under a quilt is comforted by love."

Nationwide there are over 10,000 families living in Rural Development Multi-Family Housing from Maine to California. Displaced residents who have not yet registered with FEMA are encouraged to do so by calling 1-800-621-3362.

Are You Interested in Establishing Multi-Family Housing in Your Area? We Have Resources for You!
To Learn About Rural Development's Section 538 Guaranteed Rural Rental Housing Program Visit
<http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rd/nofas/2006/grrhp012706.pdf>

Business Programs

2006 Value-Added Producer Grant Funds Now Available

Agricultural producers, agricultural producer groups, agricultural cooperatives, and majority-controlled producer-based business ventures are encouraged to apply for Rural Development's Value-Added Producer Grants, which are meant to help independent producers of agricultural commodities in developing business plans for viable marketing opportunities. Grants may be used for planning activities, as well as for working capital, for marketing value-added agricultural products.

Applications are due by March 31, 2006. The Federal Register announcing the program may be viewed at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/coops/VAPG%202006%20NOSA.pdf>. Application forms and requirements may be obtained at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/coops/vadg.htm>

Business and Industry Loan Guarantees and Rural Development Intermediary Relending Program Loans Help Save/Create 953 Jobs in Rural Maine

Over 126 businesses in rural Maine were assisted through Rural Development's Business and Industry Loan Guarantees and Intermediary Relending Program Loans in Fiscal Year 2005, representing over \$15 million in investments in rural Maine. Fourteen non-profit groups, towns, and Native American Tribes were recipients of Rural Business Enterprise Grants and Rural Business Opportunity Grants, which also assisted rural businesses through technical assistance and other economic development activities. Whether it was a boatyard in Eastport, a warehouse in Bangor, a tanning operation in Hartland, a cabinet manufacturer in Windham, or a Native American-owned mail-order prescription drug operation in Old Town, Rural Development helped to boost Maine's rural economy in many ways this past year.

The Informer Publication Dates

- February 15, 2006
- June 15, 2006
- October 15, 2006

Newsletters will be sent via email and also published on our website at:

<http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/me/newsletter.htm>

Maine Rural Partners to Unveil Innovation Center

This is a very exciting time for rural Maine. This spring, Maine Rural Partners (MRP) will launch the Rural Maine Community Innovation Center. The website, which will be located at <http://www.mainerural.org>, will provide rural communities with resources, tools, and networking opportunities for building strong communities.

Federal agency personnel will be invited to join the Federal Network on the site to share ideas and opportunities for program collaboration and improved service delivery. This Network will include a searchable agency and program directory, as well as a calendar with application deadlines.

Mark May 18-19 on your calendar to attend MRP's Community Innovation Team training event. For more information, contact Mary Ann Hayes at 581-3260, or mary.ann.hayes@umit.maine.edu. Bookmark <http://www.mainerural.org> for future use!

New Business and Cooperative Program Specialist Announced



Michael W. Aube, State Director of USDA Rural Development, has announced that John F. Sheehan, a resident of Bangor, has joined the USDA Rural Development staff as the Business and Cooperative Specialist at the State Office in Bangor.

John has a wide knowledge of finance. He has held previous positions as Director of Financial Services at the Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation and founder and principal of Weatherly Capital Partners in Rhode Island. He joins Rural Development from his previous position as Director of Business Services and Lending at Eastern Maine Development Corporation in Bangor. He has a Bachelor of Science Degree in Business Administration and a Masters Degree in Business Administration from Bryant College in Rhode Island.

Coming Soon...Rural Development's 9006 Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Program Notice of Funds at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rd/nofas/>

Community Programs

USDA Rural Development and Maine Rural Water: Partnering to Bring Quality Water to Rural Maine

The Maine Circuit Rider Program administered by the Maine Rural Water Association is well received by the communities in the state of Maine. It has provided technical assistance to communities throughout Maine for several years, and is an asset in those communities, providing assistance to both water and wastewater system operators. The Circuit Rider funding is considered well spent in a support role, which has proven to enhance the agency's objectives in reaching out to rural low income communities for technical assistance purposes.

The Circuit Rider Technical Assistance Program is operated under a contract with the National Rural Water Association. Assistance is available to help rural water systems with operational, financial, and managerial problems. It also provides on-site technical assistance to help assure cost-effective operation of rural water systems. The assistance is available at no charge and may be requested by officials of rural water systems or by Rural Development personnel. This Program complements supervisory assistance provided by Rural Development personnel. For more information about the Circuit Rider Technical Assistance Program, contact Steve Levy, Executive Director of Maine Rural Water Association, at 729-6569.

Distance Learning and Telemedicine Grant Recipients Announced

A total of 79 Distance Learning and Telemedicine (DLT) grants have been announced nationwide for a total investment of over \$29 million.

Local DLT recipients were Northeast Health, of Rockland, and Central Maine Medical Center, of Lewiston. Northeast Health will use the \$107,450 in grant funds to deploy 35 tele-homecare units, which will improve clinical outcomes, efficiency, and utilization of resources, and benefit the Counties of Knox, Waldo, and Lincoln. Central Maine Medical Center will use \$500,000 in funds for a tele-radiology and Picture Archiving and Communications System (PACS) initiative that will serve Central Maine Medical Center as the hub site and Rumford Hospital and Bridgton Hospital as end-users. Forty-seven thousand users will benefit from the program, which serves the Counties of Androscoggin, Cumberland, Franklin, Kennebec, Oxford, and Sagadahoc. (continued at right)

Rural Development State Director Michael W. Aube said "The Distance Learning and Telemedicine Program grants allocated to these First Responders are an investment in the future of rural Maine healthcare and offer immense benefits to thousands of Maine residents."

South Berwick Water District Judged "Best Tasting Water"



At the Water Tasting Contest from left to right: Representative Larry Bliss, Rural Development State Director Michael Aube, and Jane Downing of the Environmental Protection Agency

On December 1, Rural Development staff members attended the Maine Rural Water Association conference in Freeport. Rural Development State Director Michael W. Aube participated in the Water Tasting Contest. South Berwick Water District was the winner, breaking Bingham Water District's three-year winning streak. South Berwick Water District has been assisted by Rural Development through the Rural Development's Utilities Programs. Another Rural Development borrower, Newport Water District, was recognized by Maine Rural Water as "Most Improved Water System of the Year." This annual conference gives attendees the opportunity to interface with all town water facilities officials and coordinate efforts for new projects.

Funding Available for Faith-Based Organizations:

Rural Development offers many programs that can help Faith-Based and Community Organizations in rural Maine. (Examples are food cupboards, shelters)

Rural Development Resources:

<http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rd/fbcil/>

U.S. Department of Education Resources:

<http://www.ed.gov/programs/pirc/index.html>

<http://www.ed.gov/programs/whitephysed/index.html>